



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Chairman

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Carol Guthrie
(202) 224-4515

BAUCUS OUTLINES PRIORITIES FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH, CHALLENGES WHITE HOUSE PLANS FOR FUNDING

*President's FY2008 budget could cause many kids to lose health coverage nationwide;
Finance Chairman also questions cuts to Medicare programs used by most seniors*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today outlined his priorities for renewal of the Children's Health Insurance Program, and challenged the Bush administration's claim that its budget for children's health insurance will not cause American kids to lose their health care coverage. Baucus says the White House budget's \$4.8 billion is a third of what's needed to keep covering the 6.2 million children who have CHIP coverage now, and certainly will not help any more of the six million additional kids who are eligible for public health programs but not enrolled.

Baucus has named CHIP renewal the Finance Committee's number-one health priority.

"Here are my five priorities. We must give CHIP enough money to maintain coverage for those whom it already serves. We must work to reach the six million uninsured children now left behind — those who are eligible for CHIP or Medicaid but not enrolled," said Baucus. **"We must support state efforts to use CHIP to cover more children. We must improve the quality of health care under CHIP. And we must not increase the number of Americans without health insurance."**

The Bush administration is proposing changes to the Children's Health Insurance Program that would lower Federal funds for some children and for all parents currently enrolled in CHIP. The administration is also seeking to shorten the amount of time states can use their children's insurance allotment, essentially repossessing and reallocating an additional \$4 billion in funds that many states are planning to use for future coverage. Yet Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt testified that all current CHIP enrollees would keep their coverage.

"That may be your policy, but it looks like that's not going to be the effect," said Baucus. **"The effect is going to be more uninsured kids. You're shifting costs onto the states, and some of them are already strapped. There will be fewer kids covered, not more, under this plan."**

Congressional authorization for the Children's Health Insurance Program expires on September 30, 2007. Baucus says he intends for the Finance Committee to deliver a reauthorization and expansion of the program as early as this May.

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